

Upper Deschutes Resource Management Plan Preferred Alternative Subcommittee Meeting

April 15, 2004

9:00 – 3:00

Crook County Library

Present:

Terry Morton, Facilitator

Mimi Graves

Jamie Hildebrandt

Ed Faulkner

Anne Holmquist

Jerry Cordova

Glen Ardt

Katy Yoder

Joani Dufourd

Kent Gill

Clay Penhollow

BLM: Mollie Chaudet, Bill Dean, Greg Currie, Robert Towne, Lisa Clark, Mike Williams.

Introduction to Day 2 (Terry Morton):

What worked well/What didn't work well:

Good opportunities to talk/participate

Continue to stay focused on fact that we're not talking detailed analysis of each area, then we won't feel quite so threatened when we talk about areas we're concerned about. Holds people up, and we degenerated a bit.

Go through specifics then step back and look at bigger picture. Keep it instructive, but not rabbit-trailing.

Robert's joke and marathon analogy.

Discussion was good regarding interchange, but proposed changes need to be listed with:

- What is the current condition
- What was proposed originally,
- Why change/what wasn't being met,
- How would the change impact or benefit the BLM's ability to manage the area,
- What they're trying to achieve.
- Provides good information to take back to groups

Offer recaps before discussion

Offer changes in writing to see changes.

Offer visuals where possible/even hand-drawn, helps understanding.

Bill/Greg gave good descriptions of recreation/wildlife issues.

Brief discussion of where we left off yesterday.

Begin with La Pine #1

(Copied from 4/14) OVERALL RECREATION/WILDLIFE RECAP

4 changes proposed for the Preferred Alternative that will go to the committee.

- La Pine: drop seasonal closure on road use for motorized
- Allow some trail links in “roads only and non-motorized emphasis”
- Allow for some “developed” OHV use in Prineville/Prineville Reservoir Area to improve mix of use.
- Allow motorized use west of Barr Road on the canals outside the Tumalo Canal ACEC in the Cline Buttes Block.
- Modify wildlife guidelines for North Millican
 - Drop HE from 70 to 50-60 range
 - Patch size would range by habitat conditions – smaller than 1000 acre would not be prime habitat and much larger would be key habitat.
 - Avoid motorized trails within 2-4 miles of leks, avoid high value habitat
 - Seasonal restrictions on areas/portions of mechanized/motorized trails (40-80 miles trail routes).

Specific Discussion

La Pine: drop seasonal closure on road use for motorized

Southern 1/3 south of Hwy 31/Hwy 97 Junction. Had a seasonal closure to provide additional protection during winter for elk. Limited OHV and snowmobile use in the La Pine area. Change to allow more OHV use in La Pine area. Also provides flexibility to allow access to NF lands by snowmobiles during the winter. Addresses shortage of OHV opportunities in immediate La Pine area. We have small play area (Rosland). All designated as Open right now, preferred alt would put a designated system here and it needs to be large enough to use it safely. Seasonal closure Dec-April.

Workable from wildlife perspective: area is elk winter range, which mostly occurs at lower elevation or BLM/private lands in the area. ODFW views the land jumble as making it a “de-emphasis” area for elk. Not looking to boost numbers there. Other guidelines could mitigate impacts to wildlife, such as deer migration, habitat requirements, etc. We wouldn’t be opening up this area to roads everywhere.

<u>Current</u>	→	<u>Alternative 7</u>	→	<u>Proposed Change</u>
“Open”		“Seasonal, roads only”		“Open with option of seasonal closure”

INTERESTS/CONCERNS:

Future needs – can the area be closed in the future if needed? ODFW doesn’t need elk closure, but what if we need more closure for deer or another species during another season? Or in the future? *As an agency, we have the authority to place a closure wherever we want to protect something. But, we’d like to give people a sense of the types of tools the Plan might use. Maybe we won’t use it, but like to have it there.*

Wildlife – protected by wildlife primary emphasis; which would impact road/trail densities, etc.

Wildlife – elk key emphasis area, which doesn't seem that important, but also mule deer migration - but mostly spring movements.

Community Representation – is this representing La Pine community needs? *Yes, heard from residents during public meetings...especially snowmobilers.*

Wildlife – can HE of 70% be applied here? *Fragmentation makes this unrealistic – so some other guidelines may be needed here. We'll get as close as we can, but we need to describe better what this means.*

Management – flexibility and assurances. Can we leave the “option/potential” for a closure if needed to manage for wildlife? Either leave option to have one, or have option to remove one?

Management – can we add a general guideline that allows “seasonal closure” as a tool to meet primary wildlife emphasis area requirements? Apply/remove as needed.

Wildlife – there are so many unknowns and yearly problems (weather), and leaves a concern that biologists may have a hard time achieving goals – puts burden of proof of “why” we need a closure on the biologist. Same flexibility if we have the option to remove a closure, instead of proving we need one. Bill – problem is, if we switch the wording, then it almost forces us to put closures everywhere and then remove them if needed. Brothers/La Pine offers similar direction to protect sensitive seasonal wildlife habitat.

Recreation: Don't see this as necessary because we have seasonal closures in primary areas in lots of other areas anyway. Would like this only tied to La Pine because we can close where we want seasonally anyway. We're making huge changes in this area, even w/o seasonal closure. Primary wildlife emphasis areas have resulted already in low density roads, or closed to motorized use year round, and now we're saying it's still a moving target and we're leaving too much available for the future. We've already worked out how we'll get to wildlife objectives, and now we're adding things after the fact. We're implying that what we're proposing isn't going to work, then generally saying that none of the primary wildlife efforts will work. Don't want this applied to all primary emphasis areas – saying our management strategies aren't working.

Wildlife – lots of problems with elk there, so it's an ODFW de-emphasis area.

Alternative is to go to Crown Pacific or to the ranches, which is creating lots of problems and competition with livestock, resources, etc.

Recreation – if you're allowing more snowmobile use, won't the elk be pushed into the private land?

Recreation/wildlife – isn't it already being used at Open, and people can go everywhere. This will be adding people mgmt more than what is already there.

Recreation – if we're going to take the use and confine it to just designated, isn't that enough restriction? Do we really need additional caveat that we could add more closure?

Wildlife – w/ small patch size, fragmentation, road densities, etc. and we won't be meeting 70% HE – since this is so low on qualities due to size, etc. shouldn't we maintain closure?

Wildlife – would implementation be done with an EA? Would you take public input? *Yes – site specific will ID target species and the tools to manage for.* Since we know seasonal closures may be needed, why not just say it's a tool that could generally be used?

Seems like we're being dishonest to the public, if we publish motorized use times, and then throw it out later, then we don't give public any assurance that what we've worked on it the way it will be. All of this is based on accepted that we're getting rid of open and trails, and a whole range of things that have moved us toward primary, but now we're saying that maybe we need more – like a closure – conflicts with our map that describes seasonal use.

Ideas for wildlife protection: protect nest site, reduce wildlife harassment, protect land ownership...if we need a closure, can we do it? Wording change - May...if or Will...if. Keep in mind, already identified as “primary” wildlife, burden of proof and management action based on wildlife protection anyway.

Additional thought: if we don't need seasonal closure, then why do we need to limit it to roads? Can't we have roads and trails?

→ Many other wildlife species to consider, also roads only goes along with primary wildlife emphasis.

→ Roads and trails though, gives us the option to have management flexibility...if we're meeting goals, it shouldn't matter how.

We need to think about what people will see: minor area in Cline Buttes with closures vs. primary w/o a closure??? Is this what we're really dealing with? *No. Specific only to La Pine.*

Let's keep this specific to the comments we received. We didn't really receive comments on other closures.

Proposed Wording:

a. “In areas of primary wildlife emphasis in La Pine, guidelines would include the following:

Seasonal closure to benefit or retain a high level of use by targeted wildlife species may be established as a result of site-specific or area analysis if needed to achieve wildlife objectives.”

b. Or... “seasonal closures to benefit or retain a high level of use by targeted wildlife species WILL be established to achieve wildlife objectives, IF wildlife criteria cannot be met through other management actions.” (Comment: the word “will” is too directive, not the intent of this plan...but “IF” provides some condition. However, some actions outside of our control and can't be corrected by closure...too definitive, hard to live with).

Spectrum: Protect Rec Rights (already limiting use) → protect wildlife

- Limit seasonal wording to La Pine (group voted on this one: to limit to La Pine)
- Limit each area specifically ONLY if they were brought to this table.
- Limit generally
- No condition/limit

CONSENSUS Question: Can we remove motorized seasonal closure designation language in La Pine and include language as in the above “proposed wording?”

→ consensus: all above 2

Allow some trail links in “roads only (purple) and non-motorized emphasis (blue) areas”

Provide some opportunity to link across Roads only areas with a trail to get from one spot to another. Provide motorized access TO roads via a limited trail link.

Example: to get across portions of La Pine to get to play area. Doesn't mean we will do it, it just gives us the option to construct an access trail or use an existing trail or construct/use a road → to get to a motorized area.

Current condition: almost everything is open, so folks can go wherever they want.

Preferred Alt: In areas like La Pine, Prineville Reservoir eastern portion of planning area, Motorized use limited to Roads only, and some areas it's hard to get to some recreation sites.

INTERESTS/CONCERNS:

Recreation: Offer trail links in limited areas to get folks from A → B. Right now folks go out of their back yard. Can't have trails in motorized roads only, or non-motorized exclusive areas. Too limited. Language only would allow for consideration of links.

Recreation: E.g. you have two trail systems and want to link between them.

Recreation: Can you offer a sense of what is needed? *We won't be changing the management emphasis of an area...it really is just to allow you to get to an area without using or constructing a road.*

Management: If all you have are roads, then we'd like the flexibility to provide motorized users and opportunity to get to an established trail system.

Safety: will you consider adjacent landowner/private/county etc. concerns before designating and establishing these links?

Recreation: Has the opportunity to disperse use, allows them to get away from concentrated areas. Improves experience for users and decreases degradation. Less intense use. Input still allowed through EA process.

Wildlife: need to make sure they are considered with connection. Dispersal may also cause people to go/increase fragmentation.

Transportation: really just a different facility – we could put roads in, but we'd rather do a trail sometimes. We just want more flexibility. Trails can limit access more – reduce dumping, full size vehicles, etc.

Clarification: if you're using an off-road only OHV, then where can you legally operate the OHV? *Can't use county and state roads, but BLM roads can be part of designated trail system.*

How will you determine where you're going to put the links? *Site specific level analyses. But remember, the area will have an emphasis that won't change. At this level we will evaluate the impacts of the trail on wildlife, non-motorized users, and other resources.*

CONSENSUS Question: Can we allow language to provide for some trail links in “roads only” and “non-motorized” emphasis areas. (Analysis of areas at site-specific levels).

Consensus → all votes 4/5.

Allow for some “developed” OHV use in Prineville/Prineville Reservoir Area to improve mix of use.

Again, wording to allow for opportunity.

Currently: The following geographic areas: Prineville – Open; Prineville Reservoir – mostly open

Preferred: These two geographic areas have a combination of recreation emphases– Roads only (motorized use) (purple); Non-motorized emphasis (trail emphasis is non-motorized; motorized use limited to designated roads and designated roads seasonally) (blue); and non-motorized exclusive (closed to motorized use) (yellow).

Proposed Change: to address the limited motorized use development opportunities associated with the roads only and non-motorized emphasis, allow for a developed play area, short loop system somewhere in the two geographic areas. We considered whether we should change color to green (new allocation to allow motorized use on roads and trails) to allow for an area to develop motorized trails, but we thought that seemed too specific at this point, and do not know exactly where such a development should/would be best suited. The need is mainly for the local community because lots of people wouldn’t drive all the way around to trails in the Millican area, so they’ll be on the roads. We want to handle some of that use while managing user conflicts – so a small play area may suffice (but don’t have enough information to say where at the RMP scale). Highly fragmented land ownership area.

INTERESTS/CONCERN

Housing: Will folks living all the way out there going to drive into Prineville and then head down to Millican? *It’s a local issue. But if we ignore it, they’ll continue to use the road system.*

Recreation: what are other opportunities; Prineville folks will go to Millican; also some play/park area with private development.

Recreation: what would a short loop system look like? *Geographically bounded, small play area, parking area and several miles of trail. It’s a different use than what we’ve been talking about.*

Recreation: this would be a constructed, defined system to avoid it spreading out into a larger area. Rosland Pit has low fencing around play area and access to a small system that is bounded by barriers. Very contained and all designated.

Recreation: this seems like a positive action to coincide with private recreation development. May help contain use around the reservoir.

Recreation: area would still be moving toward a non-motorized area. Would avoid reservoir, eagle rock, and closed areas.

Safety: watch out for teen party gatherings at sites like these. Think about law-enforcement, etc.

Management: changing the map color at this point narrows us to where it could go before we've really evaluated the needs and site potential.

Recreation: Play area size? *Rosland is about 80-120 acres; so we'd need to find a spot that everyone could live with.*

Housing: have to deal with neighborhood/neighbor issues.

Management: what language would be used? *Language specific to those two geographic areas that would allow criteria...e.g. boundaries, parking, play, ltd trails, areas of avoidance, etc., and serves "local" community needs, not to draw from a large recreation pool.*

Originally roads only to deal with fragmented nature of the lands, needs of BOR, state parks, wildlife concerns, etc. Physical layout limits possible uses.

Management: seems to make sense to do it in the "green" rather than impact primary wildlife emphasis areas. Some deer winter range, north gets into pronghorn winter range.

Recreation: do we have a lot of user created trails in there now that are a problem? If yes, then before we put more, we'd need to get control of the existing situation. *Not putting more out there. Roads are prolific as well, and some areas are a very large problem – also dumping and general degradation. Site rehab would be needed. Could be tiered to the idea that we wouldn't provide this site until a travel management plan was completed for the area. Which would make it a bigger project from an analysis standpoint, although better. More details needed than we have at this scale to decide on site.*

Wildlife: can use trail/road designations to have a net improve wildlife habitat – as part of overall travel management of the area.

Question: What does designated area do to conditions? *Improves them, but this type of facility can attract more use. Use will increase anyway due to adjacent development. Motorized users will want more. Some adjacent landowners will not like. Right now no access to year round motorized recreation opportunities.*

Wildlife: Concern that creating OHV trail system will have adverse impact on wildlife *Managing use would be better than existing open classification. The play area should be small enough not to attract outside users.*

Group discussed size range for small area from 15 to 640 acres and 2-10 miles of trail. Characterized as similar to Rosland +adjacent trails.

Note: Should provide logic for decision.

Issue: Will it be open year round? **Identify site open year round within seasonal closure. Seasonal closure opens more options for trail locations. Could be exception to seasonal closure.**

Concern about placing the play area in a contiguous block.

Current Proposed eliminates year round OHV opportunities near Prineville reservoir.

Concern that if in Secondary wildlife emphasis that the neighbors would fight siting.

CONSENSUS: Allow for some "developed" OHV use in Prineville/Prineville Reservoir area to meet local community needs. Area is anticipated to be similar to Rosland in La Pine, something with definable boundaries, a parking area, several mile of concentrated trails, (potentially in "blue" or "purple," but not getting too far north); target the NW area of these geographic areas.

Note “avoidance areas” such as important wildlife habitat areas and features. Include consideration of the following: keep to the north side of Prineville Reservoir, meet local community (rather than larger draw) needs; be provided in the context of a larger transportation plan that is intended to provide overall benefits; ecological conditions, conflicts between users and residents.

Consensus → all 2’s and above

Modify wildlife guidelines for North Millican

- Drop Habitat Effectiveness (HE) from 70% to 50-60% range
- Patch size would range by habitat conditions – smaller than 1000 acre would not be prime habitat and much larger would be key habitat.
- Avoid motorized trails within 2-4 miles of leks, avoid high value habitat
- Seasonal restrictions on areas/portions of mechanized/motorized trails (40-80 miles trail routes).

(Bill re-explained original guidelines)

Some concern that the HE concept is arbitrary. *Models are useful in that they provide us with opportunities to consistently measure conditions.*

Sage grouse is main consideration in N. Millican, although it also serves as deer and some elk winter range. .

Question: What is the potential for listing of the sage grouse? *The BLM cannot take any action that might contribute to the listing of a species under Endangered Species Act.*

Question: Why hunting is allowed? *ODFW noted that hunting for sage grouse is not allowed in the Millican area because of the decline in population. Hunting may be allowed in specific areas where populations are robust enough to support the harvest of excess males. Hunting “wing counts” can provide important information about the status of juveniles.*

Question: Where did the targets of 70% and 50% for wildlife emphasis areas come from? *A number of references and interdisciplinary discussion were combined to formulate this approach. In particular, drew on the information from Alan Christensen and others on Elk Management in the Northern Region: Considerations for Forest Plan Updates or Revisions (Forest Service, Intermountain Research Station – GTR INT 303, 1993). In Christensen’s report, areas that intended to benefit elk and retain high use, habitat effectiveness should be 70 percent or greater. For areas where elk are one of several resource considerations, habitat effectiveness should be 50% or greater. And where habitat effectiveness is managed below 50 percent, the agency should recognize that the area is not really contributing to elk management.*

Have Tuesday AM to Resolve this issue.

Open Public Forum:

No members of the public were present for the open public forum, alternate Issue Team members were invited to the table to offer comment and participate in discussion.

Evaluation: Seems like pace was about right.

Note: GET GEO AREA MAPS FOR EVERYONE